

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 297876

EXDIS FOR SCRANTON ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT IBADAN 0844 ACTION SECSTATE INFO

LAGOS LONDON GENEVA DAR ES SALAAM DTD 17 NOV

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C O N F I D E N T I A L IBADAN 0844

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR EASUM

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RH, TZ, NI, US

SUBJ: NYERERE AND OBASANJO REJECT LATEST UK RHODESIAN PROPOSAL

SUMMARY: NYERERE AND OBASANJO TOLD ME NOVEMBER 17 THAT LATEST UK PROPOSAL IN GENEVA NOT ACCEPTABLE SINCE NO DEFINITE DATE GIVEN FOR INDEPENDENCE. NYERERE SAID HE HAD BEEN URGING NATIONALISTS TO ACCEPT WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS A FIFTEEN -MONTH TIME LIMIT, BUT OBASANJO HAD PURSUADED HIM LATEST PROPOSAL IN FACT GIVES NO ASSURANCE OF INDEPENDENCE WITHIN ANY TIME SPAN AND THEREFORE NOT ACCEPTABLE. HE URGED ME TO CONVEY THIS TO SECRETARY KISSINGER. BOTH LEADERS WILL SUPPORT A 15-MONTH TIME LIMIT FOR INDEPENDENCE.

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END SUMMARY

1. DURING LUNCHEON AT UNIVERSITY IBADAN NOVEMBER 17 IN HONOR NYERERE (WHO RECEIVED HONORARY DEGREE EARLIER IN MORNING) AND OBASANJO, MEA PROTOCOL CHIEF BALEWA TOLD ME BOTH HEADS OF STATE WANTED TO SEE ME AS SOON AS AFTERNOON SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES COMPLETE. IBADAN CONSUL HOYT AND I ACCORDINGLY MET WITH OBASANJO AND NYERERE LATER IN AFTERNOON AT MILITARY GOVERNOR JEMIBEWON'S RESIDENCE.

2. SAYING HE HAD TRIED TO REACH ME LAST NIGHT IN LAGOS, OBASANJO SAID "WE WANT TO EXPLAIN TO YOU OUR PROBLEM". HE THEN GAVE THE FLOOR TO NYERERE. NYERERE SAID THAT UP UNTIL LAST NIGHT HE HAD BEEN URGING NKOMO AND MUGABE TO ACCEPT WHAT HE THOUGHT THE BRITISH WERE PROPOSING, I.E., INDEPENDENCE 15 MONTHS FROM THE END OF THE CONFERENCE, THAT IS, MARCH 1 (ASSUMING THE CONFERENCE WAS TO END BY NOVEMBER 30). ON THIS BASIS, HE SAID HE TOLD THE NATIONALISTS THEY COULD NOT BREAK THE CONFERENCE OVER A DIFFERENCE OF THREE MONTHS. (OBASANJO INTERJECTED "YOU CAN NOT GO TO WAR OVER THREE MONTHS").

3. HOWEVER, NYERERE SAID OBASANJO HAD SHOWN HIM LAST NIGHT WHERE HE WAS IN ERROR. IN FACT, THE LATEST FORMULA EVEN BACKED AWAY FROM THE 2 YEARS SMITH HAD AGREED TO, IN THE SENSE THAT IT GIVES NO GUARANTEE OF INDEPENDENCE WITHIN ANY TIME SPAN. THIS WAS NOT ACCEPTABLE. OBASANJO ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO COMMITMENT AS

TO WHEN THE CONFERENCE WOULD END. THUS, THE CONFERENCE COULD BE STRUNG OUT INDEFINITELY.

4. NYERERE SAID THAT PRIOR TO OBASANJO'S CLARIFICATION, HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE BRITISH PROPOSAL HAD BEEN THAT THE ONLY FLEXIBLE ELEMENT IN THE TIMING FOR INDEPENDENCE WAS IN THE DIRECTION OF A POSSIBLE SHORTENING OF TIME SPAN FROM 15 MONTHS. NYERERE SAID TO REMIND "THEM" THAT THE DATE OF INDEPENDENCE FOR HIS COUNTRY HAD BEEN ORIGINALLY FIXED FOR DECEMBER 28, BUT THAT THE FORMALITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS WERE COMPLETED EARLIER AND HE DECIDED ON THE 9TH AS THE DATE. THE ESSENTIAL THING WAS TO SET A DEFINITE DATE OR TIME PERIOD WITHIN WHICH INDEPENDENCE WOULD BE GRANTED WITHOUT FAIL.

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5. OBASANJO FULLY SUPPORTED NYERERE'S POINTS, SAYING THAT HE AND NYERERE WOULD PUSH THE NATIONALISTS TO ACCEPT THE KIND OF FORMULATION NYERERE HAD PUT FORWARD. BUT THE BRITISH WERE THE PROBLEM. NYERERE SAID HE HAD INFORMED THE UK HIGH COMMISSION IN LAGOS THIS MORNING ALONG THESE LINES. I ASKED HIM WHAT HE WANTED ME TO DO. HE SAID, "PERSUADE KISSINGER". OBASANJO SAID "IT IS OBVIOUS WHAT HAS TO BE DONE AND PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHAT YOUR SECRETARY SAYS".

6. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT OBASANJO WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO SEE THE CURRENT GENEVA IMPASSE OVERCOME DURING THE COURSE OF NYERERE'S VISIT TO NIGERIA, WHICH ENDS NOVEMBER 21. OBASANJO'S COMMITMENT TO NYERERE'S FORMULA REPRESENTS THE FIRST CONCRETE EXPRESSION OF FMG ATTITUDE ON THE GENEVA DISCUSSIONS. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE FMG WILL BE ACTIVE IN SEEKING BROAD AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR THIS FORMULA. IT WOULD BE HIGHLY USEFUL IF I COULD DELIVER THE DEPT'S REACTION AND VIEWS TO OBASANJO AND NYERERE.
HOYT UNQTE ROBINSON

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